

# FreeThought

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**God is a myth, Immortality an illusion, Religion a gigantic fraud.**

# Letters

## Operation Sans Anaesthesia

Sir,

I would like to draw your attention to a news item in "Times of India" dated 30-11-77 about an "Operation", which Chief Minister of Maharashtra under-went.

It is said that Dr. N. G. Taylo of Phillippines-connected with Divine Life Society of India, removed some blood clots from the body of Hon. Chief Minister without any preparation, equipments or anaesthesia. It is not known whether "Dr. Taylo" is authorised to practise Medicine in India.

You are requested to raise the matter with the Indian Medical Council and the Press, on this and other points. I have written today to Maharashtra Medical Council and Indian Medical Association in this matter. However, I feel that organisational efforts are necessary.

Dr. RAJEEV K JOSHI,  
Bombay.

Dear Sir,

The American Evangelist Billy Graham is touring throughout India now. Some of my Rationalist friends compel me to write an article on him and his mission.

I remember, long ago, Indian Rationalist had published one or two notes on this subject, I have already referred to them, but they are insufficient. Now, who is backing his mission? Who is financing him? What is the attitude of other sects of Christians towards him?

I request the readers to give us a detailed account on this matter.

NARAYANA PERIYA,  
Kerala

## Sub : Urine Therapy

Sir,

It seems Prof. A. M. Dharmalingam, Bangalore, is under a wrong impression while stating (November 1977 issue) an accused was forced to drink his own urine as a form of torture in the police Station. This has been done not

as a method of torture but to prevent the accused from dying in Police custody because of brutal police man-handling.

To quote an instance, coir workers and toddy tappers of Trichur District of Kerala were severely and mercilessly beaten up by the Police on their strike for minimum wages. Fellowmen were given the urine of their comrades in order to get immediate relief from the pain and strain they suffered.

A year ago I had read in a newspaper that in U. S. A. a medicine name "Urakainus" had been extracted from urine for treatment of "Coronary Thrombosis" and 2 C.C. each of four injections of this Urakainus can save the life of a patient suffering from acute Coronary Thrombosis.

K. A. K. UNNI  
Bhilai

## Placating Muslim Conservatism

Sir,

The University of Bangalore had arranged as part of the Humanist Lecture series a talk by Mr. Asghar Ali of Bombay, an eminent scholar, an ardent reformist and a progressive writer of All-India repute. Mr. Asghar Ali was to give a talk on HUMANISM AND ISLAM on the 27th Nov. 76 at the Senate Hall, Bangalore. His advocacy of reform is one calculated to generate modernism among Indians in general and Muslims in particular. He is one of those few that already work for the creation of a uniform civil code.

When we were anxiously looking forward to the Lecture, it was a shock to learn that the lecture has been cancelled at the instance of a few conservative die-hards. This an insult to Asghar Ali and all progressive-minded people.

It is not that Mr. Asghar Ali was to speak, on reform of Muslim personal law. The text of his speech must be with the University. All that we plead is that there must be freedom of speech and expression for all views and progressive thoughts must not be singled out for neglect or prohibition.

In this circumstance, we in the rationalist movement strongly protest against the retrograde attitude of the University. we, therefore, most earnestly request the Governor to order the cancelled lecture by Mr. Asghar Ali to be restored.

A. M. DHARMALINGAM  
(Karnataka Rationalist Asscn.)

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH

"If they (the disbelievers) turn their back, then seize them and kill them wheresoever he find them"

The Koran (iv, 86)

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# Free thought

## THE OVERDUE TRANSFORMATION

Youngest of the major religions, Islam was the most progressive. Today, if we find it outdated, rigid and fossilised, it would only indicate how far a religion would permit adjustment. In spite of making god one and formless before whom all men were equal, Islam today is unable to carry conviction. The logical conclusion is that god is not one but none. When the premise is wrong, is it strange that the derivations contradict the realities ?

Every Muslim ruled nation (with few exceptions like Iraq) has been declared an Islamic State. In spite of oil, all of them are educationally and technologically backward. Quoran is considered to contain the ultimate truth. Sheikhs rule despotically. Life is still reminiscent of Omar Khayyam's compositions while western brokers reap a rich harvest by marketing oil outside. No realisation appears to have dawned either on the rulers or the ruled that they are in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Where the Muslims are in a minority, like in India, their leaders whip up mass hysteria only on communal issues. Muslims are generally poorer than their brethren belonging to other religions. There are a handful of rich who exploit by paying lower wages to their co-religionists in the name of Islamic brotherhood. In fact the best

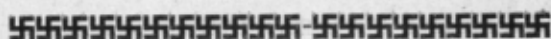


cobblers, tailors, pen or lock-repairers and other self-employed artisans are Muslims. They are known for their hardwork and honesty with no prospect of making a mark in life.

In spite of this, their influential leaders would like them to rear large families so that they will outnumber other communities. They advocate Quoranic study to keep the masses under the subjugation of mullas. They attempt to incite the masses against other religions so that the masses will not turn their attention towards the atrocities of the mullas and the economic exploitation by landlords and forced industrialists.

The reader would discern from the article on 'Bohras', the strangle hold a handful of men have over the entire community. It is an irony that in the name of safeguarding the religious rights of minorities, the nation has the minorities to sacrifice their fundamental freedoms.

Will our Muslim brethren learn to attach more importance to economic and scientific progress than to Haj, Quoranic studies and submissiveness to priesthood?



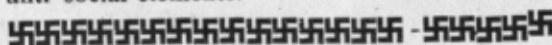
## Abuse of Foreign Exchange allotted to Pilgrims

The Reserve Bank of India allots Rs. 1,500/- in foreign exchange to every pilgrim who goes for Haj and to shrines at Iraq, etc. Approximately 8,000 pilgrims from India avail of this facility every year. Most of the formalities such as passport, visa and foreign exchange for the pilgrims are handled by Faize Huseini. This charitable organisation whose head office is at Karachi is closely controlled by the priest family.

Every Bohra pilgrim has to obtain Raza of the head priest before leaving for pilgrimage. A pilgrim who goes without such Raza loses his right to avail of the facilities such as lodging. Information is sent to the Faize Husaini about any pilgrim who has not obtained the Raza.

When a pilgrim goes for such Raza, the priest's agent persuades him to hand over his traveller's cheques in Bombay and in return it is arranged to pay equivalent value of his traveller's cheques in the local currency of the country he is visiting for the pilgrimage is then sent to make the compensatory payment.

Approximately Rs. 12 crore in foreign exchange is acquired by the priest family in Bombay. This foreign exchange is sold for profit in India to smugglers and such other anti-social elements.



## CIVIC RIGHTS DEPRIVED :

A Dawoodi Bohra, without prior permission, which the hierarchy call it 'blessings' of the Dai, cannot:—

1. Exercise his right of expression and association.
2. Stand as a candidate for any political election even at the Panchayat level.
3. Vote for any candidate, including a non-Bohra, who has not obtained 'blessings' of the Dai.
4. Publish a newspaper or a magazine or write any article in them.
5. Get engaged to wed-





# A CRITIQUE OF "What Becomes of The "Soul" After Death?"

by 'Swami' Sivananda

By Com. A. S. K.

(This is second instalment with more  
to follow—Ed.)

## 2

### NO REBIRTH

And now, "to fresh woods and pastures new" The first chapter begins with "What is death". "Rebirth and Evolution of Man" is first on the cards in this chapter.

"In the early phases of the edic literature there is practically no reference to re-brith and no stigma of sins, no dread of the hell-fire and no heavenly lure for the mortals".

I am really grateful to the Swamiji for the chrysolite clarity with which the subject is

dealt. Firstly, the Swamiji himself has debunked the claim of some fanatics who assert that the Vedas fell out of the lips of the Gods. In the early Vedic literature, there is neither Heaven nor Hell. Since there is no rebirth, one should infer that there is no reference to the existence of a soul.

We are told that "With the beginning of the Aranyaka Periods the Vedic mind progressed from a polytheistic concept of the elemental God-head towards a monistic ideal of the one absolute Reality.....".

It goes without saying that development of human thought gave birth to monistic concept of God, as "the one absolute Reality". The "Reality" is obviously the child of imaginative thinking.

How can I improve on what the Swamiji says subsequently.

"...the transmigrati<sup>o</sup>n of the soul *was evolved* as a logical necessity in order to *safe-guard an un-sullied existence of God in human thought*". (Italics mine-ASK)

I would only say quod erat demonstrandum!

"The Indian Sages, on the contrary, offer a better solution and made reincarnation responsible for the evolution of man who alone was the master of his destiny. They frankly admitted their incapability of answering why the world should have been created at all and from that basis asserted that God was not responsible for good and evil, happiness and suffering, but it was man who was responsible for the decree of his fate, capable, at the same time of his betterment through his own self effort. So, God could not be accused for all the baffling inequalities and injustices of life, and his position in human thought was kept unscathed. The theory of re-incarnation is, therefore a far more convincing doctrine than any belief that justifies an arbitrary irredemption after death".

Poverty, hunger, starvation and disease, a few rolling in riches while the millions in grinding poverty, the children of chill penury live and die in ghetto, are all much too trifling matters for the great 'God' to be pestered with. But since all these are facts of life, they had to be explained away as they could not be whisked off into thin air.

An explanation had to be given and it was given. The Swamiji says, that as a "solution" had to be offered, the Sages of India "made

re-incarnation responsible for the evolution of Man, who alone was the master of his destiny".

".....and from that basis asserted that God was not responsible for good and evil, happiness and suffering, but it was man who was responsible for the decree of his fate..."

So fate and Karma were invented by our Sages to save God!

What a tragedy has over-taken the Omnipotent, the Omniscient Lord, without whose will, not a blade of grass could move nor a single hair fall from one's head!

## OMAR KHAYYAM

The famous Persian Poet, Omar Khayyam, seems to me, to give a better explanation, if not a "solution".

"Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried, asking, "what lamp had destiny to guide, Her little children stumbling in the dark?" And-"A blind understanding!" Heaven replied.

The Poet not convinced with this reply from Heaven, points his accusing finger as when he says:

"O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with  
Gin

Beset the Road I was to wander in,  
Though will not with pre-destination round  
Enmesh me, and impute my fall to sin?"

And he ascends Olympian heights when with righteous indignation he claims

Oh, Thou, who Man with baser Earth didst  
make,  
And who with Eden didst devise the snake,  
For all the sin where with the Face of Man  
Is blacken'd, Man's forgiveness give - and  
take!

Of course, I do not expect the Swamiji steeped in Hindu Vedas to agree or even so much as forgive the Persian Poet - but that is a different matter! Omar Khayyam is known all over the world, many of our swamis are little known even in the country of their birth.

## REINCARNATION

God had to be "kept unscathed", and "The theory of re-incarnation is, therefore, a far more convincing doctrine" etc. Fate and Karma had to be invented to buttress the said "theory"!

"There are two children born of the same parents and brought up under the same, environments. One of them turns out to be a brilliant scholar with fine manners and the other becomes a dull headed ragamuffin for no apparent reason at all. *The Theory of re-birth alone might answer for the difference*". (Page 7 under lining mine - ASK).

(To be Continued)

## DAI STYLES HIMSELF AS SULTAN OF BOHRAS

The 51st Dai (who self-styled himself as Sultan of Bohras) and his two brothers had a large family. Today the family members total 182 each one of them styling themselves as Shahazadas and Shahazadis. Each one of them is paid Rs. 4,000/- per month in addition to well furnished bungalows, a chauffeur driven car central kitchen, servants and all these from the huge amount collected as tax from the community and on which no income tax is paid because bulk of the income is unaccounted.

which regulates the social law of Muslims. Mohammed's teachings and practices are really a compromise with the earlier Pagan practices and Christian and Jewish teachings. There is nothing very much original in the Quoran except that monothesis and anti-idolatry have been re-emphasized. It has been contended that as a substitute for the 300 and odd idols destroyed in Mecca, the Kaaba stone has been established as a sacred idol. If other religions worship numerous idols in human or other forms, Islam recognises the one idol of the Kaaba.

### Child Marriage

The irrational belief in Quoran and Hadith is so much that child marriage is allowed only because Mohammed married Ayesha who was 10 years old. It has not been possible for any Muslim State down the centuries to legislate either against child marriage or polygamy. Mohammed, it must be noted had 11 wives, but restricted his followers to four. While Islam has to be thanked for the right to property given to women, it has to be noted that it has hardly been possible for women to

exercise the right because of the prohibition of education for women, their confinement in pardah and the dominance of the males.

### Personal Law

The worst part of Quoranic legislation is easy divorce allowed to men by the system of Talak. It has to be noted that even today Muslims in India are opposed to any changes in Shariat (their personal law) because of their belief in the finality of the Quoran. The Hindus were equally obsessed by their scriptures as revelations from god. But the impact of the western civilization has enabled them in recent times to change the Hindu law. It is therefore very strange and irrational to find the Muslims demanding a guarantee from the political parties in India not to interfere with the Muslim law even though modern legislation has been effected in Pakistan, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Persia and Syria. So long as this irrelevant faith in revelation is maintained there can be no improvement in the social life of Muslims.



## 'HOLY' ASH BY THE TONNE

The Kazhugumalai Murugan temple near Kovilpatti in Tirunelveli district is well-known for its 'vibhudhi' (holy ash). Tonnes of 'holy' ash is made by this temple from cow dung, collected at the town's bi-annual cattle fair. The cow dung is collected there auctioned.

It is rolled into balls and dried in the temple's front yard. When dried, it is collected and taken into the oven room where it is burnt along with paddy husk. A slow fire is kept until the entire husk and turns black the cow dung kept in its core turns white. And that is the holy ash.

It is applied on 16 parts of the body, the chest, the stomach, the two wrists, the two elbows, both arms, the neck, both shoulders, the forehead, rear neck, rear waists and the crown.

—THE HINDU, Friday, July 8, 1977,



# A Muslim Turned Rationalist

By **M. H. JOWHER**, B Com.

A letter received in the last week of November 1977 is reproduced as an article—Ed,

The occasion for writing this letter marks the culmination of a long drawn-out struggle between the forces on the one hand of religion, mysticism and theism and rationalism, science and realism on the other. Born in an orthodox Mohammedan family in the earlier stages I had a definite religious bent. It is in this wake that I acquired reasonable know-

ledge of the Quoran and the Prophet. I learnt Arabic in order to understand the book in its entirety and originality. I also passed quite a few religious examinations.

## Questioning

But with my mental development I started pondering over the various questionable principles and practices of my religion. My inquisitive mind refused to take things the way they were made out to be. I started questioning the basis of the entire scheme of religion—had discussions and peaceful arguments—each leaving me with added confusion as regards religion, for in almost all these discussions I had an upper hand over my opponents who would not answer my shocking questions. While this process pulled me towards reason and rationalism, I developed a sort of offensive on so many of our religious practices each time adding to the number of my foes.

## Other Religions

Dissatisfied, I took up studying the Bible through a correspondence course conducted by the Voice of Prophecy, Poona and passed both of their diplomas, according to their standard colourfully. But Christianity was not far from Islam. I found that Christianity minus its concept of dual godship plus the teaching of Prophet Mohamed makes Islam. This religion, I found all the more confusing and dispelling reason. Then I had discussions with my Hindu friends on Vaishnavism, Shivaism and so on. Brahmanism did not appeal to me at all.

## Rejected Religion

I found that one thing common in all these religions. In varying degrees all of them demand the repulsion of reason and realism on the part of their followers. They openly said "mind has nothing to do with religion—it is a matter and business of heart". During the speeches of various religionists I realised that like the politicians they are demagogues—appealing to the emotion of the listeners rather

than his reason. Further my studies in History gave a deadly blow to the concept of religion. To add to all these, writings of rationalists like Bertrand Russel exercised a profound influence upon me. I became hostile to the religious dogma, as I see it today.

### Family Turmoils

While not denying its significance in the early days of human civilization, I refused to obey it today. This resulted in a big crisis in our family. My mother had a liberal and rational outlook ab initio and Dad had a very narrow and orthodox mentality. His efforts to force religion upon us, me in particular, brought about an open revolt. He parted company with the rest of my family. This was sometime in 1973-74. Since then he never cared to even send a word, leave alone assist us financially. This irresponsible attitude on the part of an ardent Muslim completely erased what little of

religion had remained in my mind. With the exit of father, the burden of feeding the family of 6 members fell upon me-then a student-cumt employee aged about 20 years. I saw through all these days, the darkest, with courage and determination. Today we are well off-all my family members are studying except mum, who runs a private tailoring class for girls.

### IRA Membership

I spent a good deal of time studying books and articles for and against religion. I shall continue my studies in future with greater zeal. Meanwhile I remember having read in the Weekly of 10th July a letter from Dr. Kovoov regarding his conditions for a godmen-test. In this letter a mention was made about IRA. After pondering all these days, today I have decided to become a member of the Rationalis Association of India.



## OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

The Mesak, or the oath of allegiance, which every Bohra has to take makes him say that "The master of his life is the Dai". If he breaks this oath of many conditions he loses all his possessions, his wife becomes forbidden to him and even if he performs Haj 30 times in naked feet "God shall not forgive him nor shall God accept his Haj". "There is no freedom for his (the Bohra's) soul but loyalty to the covenant".

## **EVE'S CORNER**

# **WOMEN AND RATIONALISM**

**By Margarete Bhatt**

"Blessed be God that He did not make me a woman," intone devout Jew, severy morning. Suitably, this profound self-satisfaction is reinforced by the women who pray: "Blessed be the Lord who created me according to His will."

### **Woman for Man**

However, in any man-made male-oriented religions it would be closer to the truth to put this second statement into lower-case letters to

read: "Blessed be the lord who created me according to his will." For in the final analysis it is man himself who has created woman and fashioned her into a thing for his own convenient belief. The semitic religions—Judaism, Islam and Christianity—have consistently downgraded women through the ages. St. Paul's savage indictment of them set the tone for subsequent Christian thinking. He saw marriage as a nasty necessity and said "It is better to marry than to burn." To save himself from hell fire through sexual lapse he emasculated himself. He confirmed women's subjugation by stating: "For the man is not of the woman but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for woman; but woman for the man."

### **Devil's Doorway**

The immaculate Conception was thought up many years after Christ's birth in order to raise the Virgin Mary over and above the rest of womankind who, as true daughters of Eve, were tainted with Original Sin, and in causing the fall of Adam were a sinister threat to the rest of mankind. To protect the celibacy of the Catholic priesthood they were declared evil and of the devil. "Women you are the devil's doorway," wrote one early Christian intellectual, "You have led astray one whom the devil would not dare attack directly. It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and rags."

### **Hindu Woman**

Indian historians point out that woman enjoyed a remarkable degree of freedom in ancient days; but the scriptures themselves are contradictory. While the *Rigveda* calls upon women to rule and the *Mahabharata* declares them worthy of worship, Hindu laws are stringent in matters of their property rights. Polygamy is permissible and polyandry frowned upon yet Draupadi's marriage to the five Pandava brothers was approved by the pandits. Manu the chauvinist Law-giver and many others did not allow higher education to woman, yet there are accounts of some of them taking part in public debates. Through the middle Ages, possibly because of the advent of Muslim rule, the subjugation of woman was complete. Today tradition and custom still



holds them enslaved-but at least they are offered alternatives.

## Sexual Mores

Sexual mores in any society consists of several layers. At the top is the clearly defined law of the land. Below this comes a system of morality where public opinion prevails and in India this opinion is largely dictated by religion. Finally there is that layer which is left to individual discretion. With out a uniform civil code at the top, women of certain communities are at a clear disadvantage; but it is chiefly in the two lower layers that they fare worst. It is here that grave injustices are visited on them by religious tradition and social custom. Extreme examples were the practice of sati and female infanticide. Neither were prescribed by the scriptures yet they were endorsed by public opinion and condoned by religion. Today we still have with us other examples like the strictures placed on widows, child marriage and the dowry system.

## Brain Washing and Sexploitation

A list of the inequalities forced upon Indian woman in the name of religion would fill volumes. Girls are trapped within a predetermined destiny and brainwashed into the belief that their true natures lie in piety, obedience, modesty, godliness, and the kind of virtue which comes with sexual ignorance. And they perpetuate their own enslavement by promoting these myths themselves with imbecile earnestness.

In patriarchal systems, traditions favour men and social values are always male oriented. This is reflected in our films and literature. In a study made of Indian films by a panel of woman in Ahmedabad they deplored the "sexploitation" of woman on the screen and the use of violence directed against them. But heroines in the best of Indian tradition have always been subjected to the severest test of their purity and goodness. Before they are allowed to "live happily ever after" they must prove themselves utterly and credibly good. As martyrs they command a certain respect from the audience, whereas the same approval is never extended to the lesser females in the

cast who prove all too human and succumb to temptation. As "vamps" they are the fallen ones.

## Sita's Stigma

So to be a heroine in the Indian sense is to be a victim. Sita was among the first victims of a system against which she simply could not win. Had the suspicious Rama reinstated her as his queen she would still not have survived the stigma attached to her name from having been abducted by Ravana.

Down through the ages there are hardly any genuine Indian heroines--women who acted on their own, defying all convention breaking all the rules and standing forth as persons in their own right, and as individuals and not products of a particular social conditioning. While one must admire the courage of all those who committed jauhar and sati, the fact remains that these women were not heroines either, but victims of an intolerable situation created by men--a situation in which dying by fire was preferable to the less attractive alternative of living.

The trend in modern India might hardly appear very different to women of some communities today judging from the number of suicides by daughters-in-law, unmarried mothers, girls who fall in love outside their cast, Harijan women, and the daily count of wives and mistresses done to death for infidelity.

## Embrace of Stranger

What always supprises me even among so-called "educated" woman is their passive acceptance of their lot. They suffer no sense of indignity, are not roused to protest the inequality to which they are subjected within their own families where preference always goes to the male side, nor are they moved to indignation that odium, impurity and pollution are attached to their person after childbirth and at certain times of the month. They do not see the custom of arranged marriages as barbarous in the extreme in which they are expected to submit to the embraces of a virtual stranger with suitable modesty and obedience, so convinced are they that the few words uttered by a pandit, padre or priest transform

the marriage contract into a sacrament, indissoluble and sacred in the eyes of God.

## Gandhi's Chauvinism

It is also intriguing to note that with a few exceptions all those reformers who have tried to improve the lot of Indian women have been men, and in this connection Gandhi is inevitably mentioned. Yet Gandhi contributed little or nothing that was new apart from expecting that women should come out of their homes and get more involved in social and political work. From his own accounts his relationship with his wife betray an astounding ignorance of woman's sexual nature, and the manner in which he "used" impressionable young women in his experiments with brahmacharya show him to be no less chauvinistic than most Hindu men. Given the narrow-mindedness of our Indian middle class, if a woman had carried out similar experiments with a large number of men, would she have ever hoped to establish herself as a likely candidate for sainthood?

## Sex Natural

Denial of the sexual instinct in humans is unnatural and leads to morbid conditions. When sex gets tied in with guilt and sin it becomes what it was never meant to be vicious, twisted and perverted. To suppress it

totally and deny its existence proves nothing. Yet Brahma Kumaris are convinced that their founder Pitashri Data Lekhraj has helped them to emancipation by rescuing them from sexual subjugation to their husbands and binding them instead to celibacy. Here one kind of exploitation has merely been replaced by another. To deny women their sexual nature is an affront to their sense of personhood, and as grave a trespass as the other extreme view which imputes depravity and evil to their right to enjoy sex.

## Women's Needs

Contraception, education and the right to work are three sure ways by which Indian women can try to establish their individualism. But they must first realise that woman-power cannot come from the men but from themselves. They can achieve self-determination and the right to make their own choices by rejecting all those religious beliefs that enslave them, substituting instead a liberal, enlightened outlook based on reason. They must refuse to allow education to condition them into thinking that they are biologically or intellectually inferior to men. They must strive for a new sense of personhood, for surely such self-respect is something more worthwhile than the spurious respectability that society has impressed upon them all these centuries in the name of religion.



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## ISLAMIC ATTITUDE TO APOSTACY

"They who believe not shall have garments of fire fitted unto them, boiling water shall be poured on their heads, their bowels and skins shall be dissolved thereby and they shall be beaten with maces of iron".

(Chapter XXII (Alhaj) verses 19, 20, 21 in the book of 'Holy' Koran).

# SAVED FROM MIRACLE- MONGER

extraordinary happenings called miracles. But it is of value for you to perform before the whole assembly of dervishes and also all those who come to see us."

## Miracles Performed

He accordingly arranged for the next festival day to be set aside for the performance of the strange Qalandar. For a whole day the mendicant performed miracle after miracle: he brought the dead to life, he walked on water, he caused severed head to speak, and many other wonders. The Bokharans were in an uproar. Some of them stated that this man must be a disciple of the devil, for they did not want to adopt his way of life or to credit him with any beneficent powers. Some of the peripheral supporters of El-Shah declared themselves satisfied that a "a new Sun a has arisen and tried to make arrangements to leave for wherever his monastery might be. Some of the newer disciples of El-Shah begged him to perform similar miracles, to show that he was capable of them.

## Bahaudin Exposes

Bahudin did nothing for three days. Then, before an immense concourse of people, he started to perform what can only be called miracles. One after another people saw things which they could hardly believe. They saw, heard and touched such things as were not even imagined in the traditions about the wonders of the greatest saints of all time.

Then Bahaudin one after another, showed them how the tricks were carried out and that they were mere tricks.

"Those of you who are seekers of juggling-follow the way of juggling", he said, "for I am at more serious work".

Bahaudin once received a mendicant Qalandar who offered to perform miracles to prove that he was a representative of the greatest of all mystical masters.

El-Shah said: "We are here in Bokhara the unique community whose faith is neither produced nor sustained, in particular by

...The Way of the Sufi by Idris Shah  
(Penguin 1975)





# Gandhism VS. Socialism

By Prof. SURENDRA  
K. AJNAT

Since recent past, a paradoxical term has been often heard i.e. Gandhian Socialism. There are many kinds of socialism. They vary from each other, but there are certain fundamental principles which unite those very kinds and make them related to the common goal of socialism. Socialism means the state wherein

means of production, distribution and exchange are in the hands of the society not in the hands of individuals. All the socialists believe in the common ownership of land, mines, factories, banks, business etc. There is not a single socialist who does not believe in this fundamental tenet.

## Trustee ship

On the contrary, Gandhism advocates the doctrine of trusteeship of the rich. According to Gandhi, rich people would be owners of property but they will play the part of trustees. There is no legal obligation on the trustees to act accordingly. It depends on the gentleness and morality of the so-called trustees. It is an utopian fancy.

## Class Struggle

According to socialism, there are two classes—the exploiters and the exploited. There is a constant struggle between the two. The struggle is termed-class struggle. But Gandhism denies this universal fact. It does not see exploitation in the world.

## Myth

Therefore, Gandhism would not permit any struggle against the exploiting capitalists. The doctrine of non-violence did not prevent capitalists from exploiting the poor labour but this doctrine has been used against the labour by the capitalists who swear by Gandhism. In this way, Gandhism protects the capitalists at the cost of the exploited teeming millions. This is basically against the spirit of socialism. Therefore, both these are contradictory to each other. Gandhian Socialism is a myth, created to hoodwink the masses (who look upon socialism as their saviour) and to protect the capitalists from the inevitable wrath of the exploited classes.



FREE THOUGHT

# THE CHARACTER OF GOD

**Mr. Shafiqur Rahman**

(Mr. Shafiqur Rahman, Dacca, is a 17-year old student in Class XII. He has been influenced by his teacher who feeds him also on F R E E T H O U G H T.....Ed.)

Various religions describe God ridiculously. He is described differently in different holy books.

If we study the Quran and the Hadsith, we observe a lot of confusion. There are many contradictory ideas in the Quran which Mr. Carlyle says, "I must say, it is as toilsome

reading as I ever undertook. A wearisome confused jumble, crude, incondite, endless intertation, long windedness, entanglement, most crude, insupportable stupidity, in short!

"Nothing but a sense of duty could carry any European through the Quran. We read in it, as we might in State-Paper-Office, unreadable masses of lumber that perhaps we may get some glimpses of a remarkable man.....

"Yet with every allowance, one feels it difficult to see how any mortal ever could consider this Quran as a book written in heavens, too good for the earth, as a well written book, or indeed as a book at all, and not a bewildered rhapsody written so far as written goes, as badly as almost any book ever was."

Every non-muslim will agree with Carlyle on his views about the Quran.

No Lord, Allah, God, or Bhagwan is the creator of man but man creates them. Man's ideas of wrong and right are the ideas of God; Winwood Reade's words are really true that a God's moral disposition, his ideas of just and unjust, are those of men by whom he is created.

## Allah is Eunuch

Muslim's Allah is the best among all Gods. He is incorporeal, red, black, white, yellow, green etc. He can do all, He knows all things, He is Rahim and Rahman, on the other hand He is Jabbar and Khhar. Other Gods have wives, concubines, children, they possess sexual power and copulate the beautiful girls or young unmarried women. But Muslims, Allah is eunuch, childless and unmarried. He is deprived of sexual power.

## Quran's Distortion

The Quran is the best and last revealed book by Allah. Now, He has nothing to reveal, i.e. His store of knowledge is empty.

Nothing do we find in respect of the universe, modern science and philosophy in this book. We are unable to understand how this book is superior to all books. Its ideas of universe is quite childish. Those who derive knowledge from the Quran and the Hadith are absurdly misinformed.

Other 'holy' books were also revealed by Allah, but they were revealed before the Quran and were modified, changed and increased by people, so they are not now acceptable. Man changed his books and He sitting on His fixed finite seat on seventh sky (?), was seeing that forgery. He could not protest! many people are following the modified Bible and Vedas. Has God nothing to do? He can send His messenger Jibrail (Gabriel) on the earth and Jibrail can warn the people by delivering a speech to a large crowd at a sweet place. Why did he whisper into Mohammad's ear? Could he not deliver a speech from the field 'Arafat' among a gathering?

## Character of God

Now I am describing the character of God:

1. God is the greatest satan, because He misguided the satan.

He made satan lead people astray.

2. God is a notorious impostor, because He imposed on Satan, Adam and Eve. He told Adam and Eve not to take the forbidden fruit, but prompted Satan to mislead Adam and Eve, so that they took the forbidden fruit.

3. God is not an expert but a bad artist. He is not skilled in artistic work. Man is the superior most of his creations. God could not make a more perfect animal than man. He was unable to make a more beautiful world than this world.

4. God loves man but not dearly, so he created many germs, bacteria and diseases to give trouble and to injure the people.

5. God is a savage, because he likes war (so-called holy war) and killing.

6. God is cruel, so he killed many innocent children and women by creating the deluge.

7. God's knowledge (or wisdom) was limited so he could not describe the universe accurately and clearly in His best book (the Quran).

His best and last book is now useless. For God was ignorant of modern science and philosophy we find nothing about these. He is now aged and invalid so he is unable to revise his book.

8. God's brain is very weak, He has no power to bear the accounts of sins and virtues of people in his mind upto the day of judgement. So he has engaged two angels (Keraman and Katebin) to write down the accounts of people's sins and virtues. People will be judged according to angels' reports.

9. God is not impartial. He guided Mohammed, Christ, Moses, Abraham and other prophets, so they did not commit any sin. But he did not guide Namrud, Farooq, Shaddad, Alu Zuhl, so they committed many sins.

10. God is a Sadist. He now and then creates cyclone, flood, earthquake etc.

11. God is in all bad-smelling rubbish because he is all pervading.

12. God is not all-powerful or self-sufficient, because he needs the help of angels, prophets etc.

13. God is not a good author. He  
(Continued on Page 325)



## BOOK REVIEW

By Ms. M. R. BHATTY

# GOOD GOD

by Barbara Smoker

(B & T Publishers, London. 46pp. 95 pence)

"A string of verse to tie up the deity" is the sub-title of this delightful book of verse illustrated with cartoons by Joyce Harpur. Barbara Smoker, President of the National Secular Society in England, came from a devout Catholic background and had intended to become a nun. A stint of wartime service in the WRNS, part of which was spent in Ceylon, made her think again about her religious vocation, and though she devoured theology after the war, she grew increasingly skeptical until she finally rejected Christianity in 1947. She is well-known for her lectures, broadcasts and TV appearances in which she presents her

atheistic views in good-humoured piquant manner. She is also author of *Humanism* published by Ward Lock Educational in their *Living Religions* series.

The blurb on this book of verse describes the work as a combination of "witty and polemical expertise with a remarkable flair for rhythm, rhyme...and reason." But though the treatment might appear flippant, Ms. Smoker presents new and intriguing angles on the age-old Christian concepts of the origin of the world, Creation, God the First Cause, predestination and Free Will, Original Sin, conventional Christian morality, the dilemma of human suffering, eternal life and hell-fire, and much else.

### GOD's IQ NIL

Modern Christian belief having become used to the idea of evolution still suggests that there has been a Divine Purpose in the entire process, through millions of years of trial-and-error up to the final Climax—the creation of Man. On this the author has this to say :

What is 'divine intelligence' ?

It is, on all the evidence,  
eternal chance-not skill:  
not learning from experience;  
not systematic interterence-  
thus, God's IQ is nil!

...a sentiment which fits in with Russell's wry conclusion that "at last, in the fulness of time He produced Man—including such specimens as Nero, Caligula, Hitler and Mussolini, whose transcendent glory justified the long painful process."

The author next examines the source of human values and morality. If goodness is godliness then morality is derived from religion while immorality is that which is not sanctioned by religion. Agnostics see no such distinc-

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## PROHIBITION IN PRACTICE

A Muslim priest was offered a drink by one of his friends. He refused the same raising three objections. He said that his religion prohibited drinking, secondly he was proceeding to give a talk on prohibition and lastly that he had just had a glass.

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tion. But pious Christians are sure they know what sin is, and this sureness springs from their fear of punishment and Hell Fire,

Suppose I knew his godly view  
and feared his godly might,  
I'd doubtless do his will ; would you  
then call my conduct right ?

However, the real truth is that God's own concept of sin is exactly what He derives from humans themselves, since He is a figment of our own imagination. We ascribe human qualities to him and are flattered that he thinks the same as we do !

You mean that God's morality  
with mans is well in line ?  
No doubt, if human values be  
Dependent on divine !

### GOD'S SEX

Joyce Harpur has an amusing cartoon to verse 10 dealing with the sexual identity of God with a prim-mouthed formidable-looking woman enthroned against a backdrop of the Heavens with two attendant angels—a female deity surely as implacable as the male equivalent ;

When I refer to God as 'her',  
Your senses all but fail :  
But if, being God, 'he' has no body,  
why must he be male ?

If God is a spirit the idea of sexual identity is ridiculous, but religion demands suspension of reason, and in its place substitutes faith.

Since faith demands no evidence,  
religion is in treason  
against evolved intelligence  
against our human reason.

Religion also demands that one should be passive and accept all adversity as a testing of one faith, with promise of just rewards for all the faithful in Heaven. However, this is no answer to the ever-present problem of unhappiness and suffering :

While moralists deny that ends  
can bad means justify,  
they claim, for present ills, amends  
await us, when we die ;

But this "everlasting bliss" is offered only in return for "creeping adoration" by a "callous god".

### STARVING MILLIONS

Such a god hardly fits in with a concept of God the Father who sees humans as his children. Nor does it offer a solution to the dilemma of human suffering where millions starve and die destitute. Must we assume that God's goodness extends only to those who are better off.

How warped to worship one so cruel  
while preaching brotherhood !  
If you believe in God, than you'll  
condemn him—or you should.

Your grateful prayer of praise that there  
is food for you and yours  
shows little care for those elsewhere  
who starve—whom God ignores.

According to Christian theology every soul that is born is tainted by the original Sin of Adam and can be redeemed only by belief on the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet each soul is created afresh for each new person. How then can each inherit the sin of Adam ? Also, how does it happen that God who himself creates each soul then imputes sin to it ?

And if the human animal  
(as doctrine says is true)  
inherits just the physical,  
a soul being cast anew  
for every person (germinal)—  
why, then, should God imbue  
each soul with sin (original) ?  
His logic looks askew !

Sickness and disease are believed to be the result of god's wrath sent as punishment for sin. "Acts of God" have involved epidemics

of plague and pestilence, destruction by flood, fire and earthquake. However, modern science has succeeded in diminishing God's authority in this field—which is why religion has always opposed the progress of science. If disease and epidemics are better controlled today it is not because God is more kindly disposed towards mankind, or that humans are sinning less :

But what caused plague and pestilence  
to dwindle in defiance  
of old Jehovah's petulance ?  
Theology or science ?

"the Good Book's not much good" says Ms. Smoker, when it comes to irrigation medication or vaccination. "Scripture is a loss : the substance of its 'revelations' is that God's the boss."

What kind of deity is it that glories in the abject grovelling of humans, and only needs a little flattery to change His mind ?

Why seek his 'all-wise' mind to change,  
by begging him for favours ?  
Obsequious hymns of praise? How strange  
if flattery he savours !

## BELIEF IN CRUELTY

Ms. Smoker then goes on to comment on the essential cruelty of the Christian belief in Hell Fire and everlasting damnation. Even the very concept of Satan is perverse, irrational and the product of a sick mind. Yet Jesus of Nazareth preached all this. His own crucifixion passes belief in its cruelty, yet it was so ordained by God :

And sacrifice, it seems, attracts  
a god whose jurisdiction  
(shylock-like) for debt exacts  
a cruel crucifixion.

Her conclusion is that the entire concept of a divine plan, of heaven and hell and eternal life all springs from man's monstrous egotism and his conviction that god is terribly concer-

ned about the fate of each puny human who struts briefly across this planet earth.

One species, we, of millions  
on one small satellite  
of one small star of billions  
in one galactic light !  
What arrogance to think that he  
might be especially fond  
of us, in all this galaxy —  
and galaxies beyond.

## GOD HOUNDED

She commences her book with :

When I was young and credulous,  
religion captured me ;  
then teasing thought and sedulous  
inquiry set me free.

And concludes suitably with a stanza which occurs throughout in slight variation like a refrain :

Good God ! Of him, I recollect,  
In youth I had no doubt,  
But faith with fact counterchecked;  
And so I hound him out.



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(Continue from Page No. 322)

unreasonably endlessly repeated the same things. His books are full of contradictory ideas. He is half mad, so he likes ridiculous rituals.

14. God is no more than man. He likes compliment and commendation in the form of prayers.

15. God loves prostitution and paradise is a famous and beautiful Brothel. There are numerous harlots (celestial Nymphs, fairies, celestial female choristers and musicians) in Parradise.





# A Close look at Islam

By

**Prof. A. M. DHARMALINGAM**

Islam started as the third biggest religion in West Asia. Prophet Mohammed, the founder of the religion has been claimed to be an illiterate, but it has been recorded that Mohammed had contacts with Christian and Jewish religious leaders and therefore should have had personal knowledge of the tenets of those religions. Every prophet claimed himself to be the last messenger of good for the salvation of mankind thereby discrediting the claims of the earlier prophets. Mohammed, in particular, claimed himself to be the last prophet and therefore all talk of a successor to him was bad. Like the earlier two religions, Islam is also based on revelation. No revelation can be one if it can be set aside by another prophet,

for anything coming from God must be infallible and ever true.

The main defect of Islam as in the case of Christianity and Judaism has been reliance on revelation. Orthodox Muslims not only treat the Quoran as revelation but treat the sayings and doings of Prophet Mohammed as next only to the Quoran in importance. People who regarded revelation from above as the final authority of all knowledge in which human beings take interest for their progress or salvation, have not progressed in science or technology. The one thing to the credit of Islam is the firm foundation given to monotheism and anti-idolatry. Arnold Toynbee, the great historian, has stated that Islam re-established monotheism and non-idolatry when the same ideas earlier propounded by Moses and Christ were mutilated and practically destroyed, and that the world should never forget its gratitude to Mohammed. Monotheism, apart from many other things contained in the Quoran, was progressive for the age in which Islam was established. There were also other progressive ideas, as for instance, property rights given to woman, equality of all men irrespective of class, race, colour and creed.

## ARAB RATIONALISM

Rationalist ideas were not wanting in the Arab world after the death of Mohammed. In the 2nd century of the Muslim era, Hassam-al-Baseri, a muttazalite, well versed in Greek dialectic believed in reason as against revelation. He and his followers in support of rationalism carried on a battle between the power of man (alquadariyya) and compulsion to act (altabariyya). He stood for free will as against predestination and asserted that the Quoran was a creation of man and not a pre existing book in heaven as claimed by orthodox mullas. Because of fanatic belief in revelation, Hassam-al-Baseri and his followers were persecuted and suppressed.

## LARGE SCALE TAX EVASION

Sandoz House property was purchased by the Bohra priest, through a Trust, at Rs. 65 lakhs whereas they showed in the document a price of Rs. 35 Lakhs only—paying the balance of Rs. 30 lakhs in unaccounted money.

Later Al-Mamun took the side of rationalism and forbade belief in Quoran as revelation and denied its eternity with God. Imam Ahamed Ibin Hanbal believed in revelation and founded the most orthodox fanatical section of Muslims. Al-Mamun was persecuted, his speeches banned and suppressed by the Caliph Al-mutawakkil.

Later still, Ikwan-al-Sapha (brethren of purity) made an effort to reconcile dogma with reason. They believed that religious law was defiled by ignorance and could only be improved by research. They tried to reconcile the tenets of Islam with liberal rationalist philosophy of the Greeks. They too failed.

### Setback to Rationalism

The biggest achievement of Islam is that it survived the Mongol onslaught between 1200 and 1300 A. D. The Mongols very nearly destroyed the Arab civilization and the Islamic religion. The Turkish invasion of the Arab countries from 1300 suppressed the Arab culture and stopped all further progress of the Arabs in science, philosophy, astronomy and other disciplines. The contribution of the Turks who controlled Islam right up to modern times has been 'nil'. The Arabs who were more liberal were willing to absorb science and philosophy from the Greeks but were prevented from making further progress and were reduced to slavery. By the end of the 19th century, because of Muslim obsession with revelation and the finality of knowledge contained in the Quoran and Hadith, they were brought under European Christian domination.

### YOUNG TURKS

The Turks never tolerated any reformers, until in the beginning of the 20th century, Islamic conservatism and political subordination were challenged by the Young Turks. These young reformers desired secularism and modernism thereby unsettling many of the principles established by the revealed scripture of Quoran. But the orthodox religious forces were conservative enough to resist modernity. It was not until after the defeat of the Turks in the first world war and the emergence of Kemal

Pasha that Turkey was finally secularised and modernised.

### REASONS FOR BACKWARDNESS

Five fundamental articles of Islamic faith have not encouraged the Muslims to take their proper place in the modern world. The articles are:

1. Belief in the oneness of god and that Mohammed is the only messenger of god. No compromise or relaxation has ever been permitted in this profession of faith. In fact a person was recognised as a Muslim if he subscribed to this article only. While the first part of the article may be acceptable, the latter part cannot be to the people belonging to other religions.

2. Prayers five times a day. In modern times it is a sheer waste of time and being a routine it does not help in the development of either the body or the mind.

3. The Ramzan Fast for one month though claimed to be for self control and self discipline has been found to affect industry, administration and sports in modern times.

4. Charity of 1/40th of the income to the poor is a laudable article for distribution of wealth and caring for the needy. But no Muslim Government at any time has strictly passed laws to enforce this article.

5. Haj Pilgrimage (once a year for those who can afford): This has mostly caused the Muslim to concentrate his attention on this to the exclusion of other useful journeys for the acquisition of knowledge, science and technology.

### THE QUORAN

The Quoran is a small book of the size of the new testament. It contains numerous repetitions and useless material and if these are removed the bulk will be very much reduced. The Quoran is important for its legislative part

# THE STRANGE CASE OF RAHMAN BEY

**J. B. S. Haldane**

(Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, F.R.S., an eminent Scientist, Humanist, Rationalist, Marxist and popular science writer needs no introduction. He was one of the founding fathers of the Mathematical theory of organic evolution. He was an Indian citizen during his last few years. According to Mr. Jagat Singh: The main lesson he (Haldane) held out to us was that scientific excellence does not necessarily depend on elaborate and expensive instruments, but that worthwhile contributions may yet be made by methods no more elaborate than visual observation and simple arithmetic...Ed.)

In several daily news papers July 1, 1938, there was a story of an Egyptian called Rahman Bey, who threw himself into a trance and stayed for an hour at the bottom of a swimming bath in a metal tank. "My peculiar gift was discovered by a Yogi priest when I

was a child" he is reported to have said. And the whole thing is put across to the British public as a sample of mysterious gifts of Orientals, who, of course, are so unlike us.

Now there are two funny things about this story, before we come to the tank at all. The name Rahman Bey means Colonel Merciful, which strikes me as funny. And as the Yogi philosophy is a product of India, it is remarkable that its adherents should experiment on Egyptian Children.

The daily Herald gave a photograph of the tank, which measures 8 feet by  $1\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 2 feet, according to one of my colleagues, and rather less according to me. So it holds 20 to 25 cubic feet. An average man occupies  $2\frac{1}{2}$  cubic feet, so Rahman Bey had about 20 cubic feet air. Now a man doing light work uses about 24 cubic feet of oxygen in 4 hours. If he lies still, this is reduced to about half-

So Colonel Merciful used about half a cubic foot of oxygen in an hour. As 20 cubic feet of air contain just over 4 cubic feet of oxygen, he had plenty to spare at the end of the hour and could have gone on for another two hours. After this time he would have been very short of breath, and would have panted so much that the remaining oxygen would have been used up more quickly. And when he came out after three hours he would have had a nasty headache. For besides using oxygen, a man makes a slightly smaller amount of carbon dioxide and after breathing air containing anything over 6 per cent of this gas for an hour, one has a short but violent headache and may one sometimes vomit<sup>1</sup>.

Before being shut up in the tank, Rahman Bey "shook like a pneumatic drill and then flung himself violently into unconsciousness". He should have laid down quietly. But if



Rahman Bey was unconscious he saved himself an hour of boredom. However, if I can borrow a tank, I am perfectly willing to spend an hour at the bottom of a swimming bath for a suitable fee to be paid to the International Brigade Dependents Fund<sup>2</sup>.

Many readers will say 'What does all this matter?' It matters quite a lot. The physiology of human breathing is involved in questions of mine and factory ventilation and of protection against poison gas, which today concerns 'everybody'. And because we are not educated in the matter we take the Government's statement on gas defence as seriously as the journalists took Rahman Bey.

I recently had an airtight tank with glass I window made in which a child could be shut up for several hours during a gas attack. I stayed in it for an hour myself, and got rather warm whereas Rahman Bey was doubtless cool at the bottom of his swimming bath. But I had to try three mothers before any of them would allow their baby to stay in it for even half an hour.

There are no gas masks for babies<sup>4</sup> and a tank of this kind would give protection for some hours at any rate. But because we are not taught such elementary facts about ourselves as how much oxygen a man uses per hour, a good many babies are going to die if gas is used against civilians in a future war.

You may call me a gross materialist, but it seems to me more important that children should be taught such facts as this than that they should know how often King Henry VIII married or who won the Battle of Agincourt.

There are a great many strange stories about the wonderful powers displayed by vari-

ous Asiatics and Africans. When they are investigated they generally turn out either to be untrue or to be based on elementary facts of human physiology which are known to certain groups in India, but not yet generally known in Europe.

For example I have pushed a red-hot cigarette end against the finger of a hypnotised English man without causing either pain or blistering. If he had been an Indian, it would have made a story for the daily press.

These stories are very useful to imperialists, because they help to spread the idea that the human races are very different. If people in England believe the myth that members of coloured races have powers which Europeans do not possess, they will be ready to believe another myth namely, that they do not possess the power of looking after their own affairs.

It is time that we realised that scientific investigation has shown that people of different races are remarkably alike, and that it is only prejudice and the self-interest of exploiter which prevent them from being brothers.

1. So do others, as the experiments on the International Brigaders in connection with the loss of the Thetis showed.
2. Unfortunately, the challenge was not taken up.
3. As the Thetis case showed, it is also important to submarine crews.
4. A few are now available.



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## BARBAROUS REPRESSIVE MEASURES

Illustrative examples to show the barbarity used against those who have dared to earn the displeasure of the Bohra hierarchy are: 1) buried dead body of an old woman was dug out from the grave and left on the footpath in Bombay because her son refused to submit to unreasonable demands of the hierarchy; 2) several ladies have been forced to take divorce from their husbands because the husbands defied the dictates of the hierarchy.

# PERSECUTION OF BOHRAS

## History

The Dawoodi Bohras share the fundamental doctrines like unity of God, prophethood of Mohammed, etc., with other Muslims. They along with other Shia Muslims, are partisans of Ali in the matter of succession-spiritual as well as temporal - to Prophet Mohammed. However, the ismailis (Bohras are Ismailis) and Shias differed on the issue of succession to the office of Imam and as far as Bohras are concerned Ismail succeeded to this august office.

## Underground Organization

Ismailis developed a secret and highly efficient underground organisation known as Dawat (mission) to propagate their doctrines. They had political ambitions too. They succeeded in capturing power first, in north Africa. However, on account of its esoteric doctrine (belief in hidden meaning of the Koran and other religious teachings of Islam), the mission, even in its hey-day, remained secretive in nature and tightly knit organisationally.

## Conversion of Hindus

When the fatimid empire was tottering, two Arabs were sent to India on proselytising mission. These missionaries, succeeded in converting a large number of Hindus in Gujarat, mainly from local trading communities. These early converts came to be known as "Bohras" precisely because all of them were small traders.

## The Dai

The dai (literally summoner to faith) at its apex enjoys supreme religious authority in the

## — Asghar Ali Engineer

Minorities tend to react to the challenges of modernism in a way, which does not jeopardise their separate identity. It was for this reason, perhaps justifiably, that the Indian Muslims in general, and Dawoodi Bohras - a small Shiya sect in particular, were, slow to respond to the forces of modernism. Their psycho-social feedback kept them anchored, to their highly institutionalised pattern of life.

## Business Community

Moreover, the Bohras being a petty business community always tried to buy their peace with whosoever happened to be rulers. This withdrawal from the stream of political events further retarded the process of modernisation among the Bohras.

## DR. KOVOOR FOR NEHRU AWARD

Trombay Rationalist Association have sponsored Dr. A. T. Kovoov's name for the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. The I. R. A. not only welcomes the move, but feels that the Government of India should honour the veteran rationalist for the service he has been rendering to the cause of international understanding in this part of the world. Rationalism cuts across race, religion and sex and thus promotes international understanding the surest way.

I. R. A. urges all the constituent units and similar minded organizations to impress upon the Government of India on the eminent suitability of Dr Kovoov for this coveted award.

absence of Imam supposedly in seclusion. The Dais were traditionally God fearing. The Dawat (mission) was transferred to India from Yemen in sixteenth century. The Indian Dais (the Dais in India were not of Arab origin) continued to provide religious leadership.

### Succession Problems

However, things began to change with the death of the forty—sixth Dai, in 1840. The controversy centred around the question of Nass (appointment of successor through divine inspiration) on the forty seventh Dai. The then pontiff, Abdul Quadir Najmuddin, apparently had to quieten by liberal distribution of titles and perquisites. This opposition was based on religious and not on modernist grounds. Now on there had begun the process of accumulation of wordly riches and centralisation of power at the cost of Ulamas. These Ulamas were not struggling for modern reforms. But only in the sense that Martin Luther or John Calvin were unwitting precursors of European modernisation can one say that these men played a like role among the Daudi Bohras.

### Syedna Rears His Ugly head

The process of accumulation of wealth and power reached its apogee during the period of Syedna Taher Saifuddin, the 51st Dai. He became Dai at the prime of his youth and remained enthroned for almost fiftytwo years. He was a shrewd politician and centralised all powers religious as well as secular into his family. The Ulamas now were no longer free to solemnise marriages or perform funeral rites without his express permission called "raza". On all such occasions religious tithes and other

taxes were collected with back effect. He and his family grew fabulously rich; this phenomenal wealth was employed to suppress dissent and crush the opponents. In 1923, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly of India the Mohammedan Wakf Act to regulate religious trusts. However, Syedna Taher Saifuddin sought an exemption for his sect. This exemption, though initially granted for three years, continues till today.

### Resentment

The then Syedna like his present successor, claimed that he was not accountable to the community for the moneys he collected. The sons of Sir Adamjee Peerbhoy, along with many others requested the Syedna in 1917 to render the account for the fabulous amount of money collected every year from the alms box kept in the mausoleum of Chandabhai Seth. Syedna refused to oblige. Peerbhoy and a few others instigated a suit against the trustees of a lucrative alms box in 1917.

### Education

The legal battle also raged on the question of modern education. The Hakimiyah High School at Burhanpur, run by the progressives, became the target of Syedna's wrath. The progressives won the case. He used rather freely the weapon of ex-communication against his progressive adversaries thus throwing their lives out of gear. The reformist movement, though it stirred the imagination of many, did not strike firm roots as modern education was still sporadic and halting. Moreover, the prevalent tendency among middle class professionals, whatever caste or community they belong to, to

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## FANTASTIC CLAIMS OF THE BOHRA DAI

The hierarchy advances various claims on behalf of the Dai. Few of them are listed here : 1) The Dai is the sole representative of God on earth, 2) The Dai is not accountable to the law of the land; 3) The Dai has absolute control and authority over the life and property of his followers; 4) Soul of a dead person will not be admitted to heaven if he has earned the displeasure of the Dai.



depend for their practice on the caste or community of their birth, deprives them of their courage to revolt against the anti-diluvian practices. Again, there is uneven pattern of education in most of the families, the ratio of education being weighted in favour of men, woman remaining bound to the conservative circle. This becomes a formidable preventive force and only a few men can resist it successfully.

### Law Suits

In pre-independence era, the reformists had mostly confined themselves to either law suits or legislative lobbying. In a lighter vein, there have been cases in which a Bohra bridegroom sued the Syedna for return of his "beard deposit" when he had shaved the formerly required beard too soon after the marriage to satisfy the leader. Syedna, to meet the expenses of these costly litigations, forced the wealthy Daudis to deed over to him their religious endowments (auqaf) under threat of excommunication.

### Syedna Pockets Leaders

After the cataclysmic events of partition in 1947, the reform movement remained at a very low ebb for almost a decade in the sub-continent. Syedna in order to gain political

influence, made strategic donations. He gave generously to the Aligarh Muslim University although very few Bohras attend that North Indian Institution. This gave him nation-wide publicity and put him in contact with Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Zakir Husein and others. In 1953 he was made honorary chancellor of Aligarh. The government, while paying lip sympathy to their cause, did nothing to curb the persecution of reformists. It is a sad commentary on our secularism that, more often than not, our ministers associate themselves publicly with heads of religious sects many of whom trade in religion. Fakruddin Ali Ahmed, the former President, inaugurated the fabulous mausoleum of late Syedna Taher Saifuddin built at a cost of two and half crores. The less said about the socialist precepts and feudal practices of our rulers the better.

### Cruel Boycott

Barat (social boycott virtually amounting to excommunication) is used not only against reformists but even against those who do not break their relation with the reformists. Shri. F. I. Manasawala had to beg Syedna's apology under threat of social boycott because he offered condolences to his reformist son-in-law whose only brother had expired and the bereaved brother was not allowed to take

## RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?

Among other conditions, the 'Mesak' oath binds a Bohra, male or female, that he/she shall :

1. Wage war against the person who will be declared as an enemy by the Dai ;
2. Not have any intercourse or correspondence with whom the Dai is hostile.
3. Spend his property and life in the casue of the Dai ;
4. Report fully to the Dai any person who transgresses the covenant ;
5. The Dai shall gift and shall deprive him as he pleases.

If a person taking the Oath breaks it then among other things :

1. All his possessions shall become unlawful to him and he will lose all ownership over them ;
2. If he has a wife then she becomes forbidden to him ;
3. There is no freedom for his soul but loyalty to the covenant.

part in the funeral. Similarly many marriages and business partnerships have been dissolved because Syedna had declared barat against one or the other partner.

than hundred persons were badly injured and one succumbed. But the brave men and women of Udaipur withstood all this and much more to fight for their freedom from this degrading state of 'serfhood'.

## Denial of Fundamental Rights

It appears as it is the Daudi Bohras do not enjoy any fundamental rights. Every Bohra, on achieving age of puberty, has to give an oath of allegiance (mesak) according to which Syedna has power of life and death over him. While successfully manipulating democratic institutions in the country in his favour, he refuses to agree to democratic principles of management within the community on grounds of religion.

## Udaipur Revolt

The Bohra Youth Association in Udaipur demanded autonomy for managing secular affairs of the community and ran to heavy weather. Syedna's henchmen went to the extent of launching brutal assault on the followers of the Bohra Youth inside the mosque with daggers, knives, lathis and cycle chains. More

## Mass Marriages

After a long wait of two and half years for permission from Syedna to marry (which was never granted) the young couples and their parents decided to solemnise marriages independently of Syedna. A Mass marriage of 106 couples was solemnised in the presence of representatives of various religions and was attended by not less than twentyfive thousand persons. It was a unique experiment in unostentatious marriage. The reformist movement has, for the first time in its history, become a mass movement.

The reformist Daudis have regrouped themselves under the banner of the Central Board of Dawoodi Bohra community which promises a democratic alternative to the authoritarian rule of Syedna. The progressive Bohras are convinced that time is on their side. Let Syedna see the writing on the wall.



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## A MUSICAL LAKE

A new lake has been put on the map by topographers of Tajikistan, in Soviet Central Asia. It was discovered at a height of almost 4,000 metres above sea level in one of the canyons of the Zeravshan Range.

Jagged blue layers of ice, sheer black walls of the canyon and ever-green forest form a unique landscape here. But the explorers were astounded by more than the extra-ordinary beauty of the locale. The lake was found to be musical. The cries of birds and the splashes of stones falling into the water are quaintly echoed by powerful melodious chords. This unusual sound effect is created by the cliffs, which are riven by cracks and riddled with grottoes. The lake was named Kuli Allo, the Tajik for "Echoing Lake". Scientists say it owes its birth to a rock-and snow avalanche which cut off a host of springs from this canyon. (From the Magazine "PRIRODA").

# NEWS AND NOTES

## YET ANOTHER 'MIRACLE' EXPOSURE BY NAGPUR RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION



**Dr Pande C. G.**

During November, 1977 there were reports in press about the spiritual powers of a 'Baba' called 'Doliwalebaba' or 'Khatolibaba' (Khatolis, is colloquial for cot). The power consisted in causing a speedy movement in a cot held by 4 persons on their palms by chanting 'mantras'. It is claimed that the moving cot leads to the house of persons responsible for deaths, illnesses and other ills through their indulgence in witchcraft, black-magic etc. The real name of the Baba is Ramachandra Masram, a middle aged man from the neighbouring state of Madhya Pradesh. He was brought to Wardha, a district place about 80 kms. from Nagpur, with the intention of identifying sinners or culprits in towns of Wardha district. It is claimed that the cot held by four persons, with its legs resting on the lemons placed on their

palms, moves by itself with tremendous speed dragging with it the four holders when 'Baba' starts chanting mantras. Goddess "Khatumai" is said to enter the cot making it mobile through its powers. Persons in the houses to which the cot leads are held sinners and culprits and are mercilessly beaten to which Baba is a silent witness. It was reported in press that the beating of innocent persons had gone to the extent of inflicting burns on the so-called culprit's body while in another case the ear of the sufferer was chopped. These atrocities drew the attention of rationalists and Dr. Pande issued a challenge in press to the Baba and his supporters to demonstrate movement of cot by mere chanting of 'mantras'.

In the meantime, Baba was arrested by Police on the basis of complaints by the sufferers but was released on bail as he enjoyed the patronage of some big guns. A social worker of Wardha, Mr. V. Chordia contacted Dr. Pande to enquire about the veracity of the phenomenon. Dr. Pande told them that it was a case of sheer mischief and that a stationary cot could not be moved by any spiritual power. He also urged the citizens and police to hold a public demonstration of the phenomenon and agreed to examine the same with his fellow rationalists. Baba, over confident about his claim, agreed for a public demonstration at a place of his choice with a temple nearby. The demonstration was fixed at 18.00 hours on 12th December, 1977 at Wardha. The programme was organized in consultation with the collector, the D.S.P. and others and funds were collected to meet the expenses of the show. Baba signed a contract in the Collector's office specifying his conditions and requirements for the programme and his obligations, in case his feat turns out a failure. It was agreed that persons holding the cot would be of Dr. Pande's choice and that these persons should not eat meat or drink liquor on the day of demonstration.

The venue was an open ground near Hanumantekdi on the outskirts of Wardha. A rectangular enclosure (100' x 100') of barricades and a small pendal in a corner over the chosen temple were erected. Only some 50 selected persons were given entry into the



enclosure while spectators were required to witness the show from beyond the barricades. A team of rationalists consisting of Dr. Jadhav, Dr. Kochar, Mr. Bhure, Mr. Dulat, Mr. Harish Deshmukh, Prof. Pawar and Dr. Pande reached the place at 18-00 hours. The baba turned up at 19 30 hours. During the introduction it was made clear to the Baba that whatever objections he had, he should raise them beforehand and not after the programme.

Baba commenced his 'Pooja' and 'Havan' at 19-30 hours and continued upto 3-30 hours (on 13-12-77) accompanied by singing of bhajans. Invoking of the cot, originally scheduled at 3-00 hours, was delayed because the Goddess revealed to the Baba that she would make appearance around 4-00 hours.

Before commencing the cot-moving feat, organizers obtained a written statement from the baba that all the conditions laid down by him were fulfilled. Undertaking was also taken from those volunteering to hold the cot that they were entering the trial at their own risk. This was necessary because Baba claimed that persons holding the cot but refusing to co-operate were likely to be thrown into a fire pit by the charged cot.

At 3.45 hours, Dr. Jadhav, Mr. Bhure, Mr. Dulat and Dr. Pande were invited by the baba to hold the cot resting its legs on the lemon placed in their palms. Earlier, these persons were required to take bath with cold water around 0.15 hours. Though difficult in the wintery night, the requirement was fulfilled lest he should get a chance to complain later on. The crowd which swelled by then to around 25,000 was anxiously and eagerly waiting for the cot to move when Baba started chanting mantra. For about an hour, the cot showed no signs of even the slightest movement. Thereafter, Baba and his followers appealed for extension of time thrice. Organi-

zers gave him the last 5 minutes when an hour and 30 minutes had already passed without even an inch of movement of the cot. In the meantime spectators, who had arrived from far off places and stood for hours in the open, were getting impatient and anxious to see the cot moving. When the cot did not move even after one hour and thirty five minutes of strenuous holding, the organizers announced the failure of the feat in consultation with the Baba. At the request of Baba, the four holders of the first batch were replaced by other four who included Dr. Kochhar, Mr. Deshmukh, Prof. Jagtap of Wardha and one Mr. Lonkar who was a believer in Baba and had experienced cot movement on earlier occasions. Baba failed to move the cot even after trying hectically for ten minutes. The failure was finally announced on the mike. The irate mob which included people who had suffered earlier and those who were believers first and disillusioned now rushed towards the pandal to express their annoyance over Baba's misleading the people and causing hardships to the innocent people. Police anticipated the mob-fury and managed to take away the Baba in a police van into their custody to avoid any untoward event.

The exposure of Baba's miracle was complete and doubtless giving no ground to the Baba and his patrons to defend the failure. The demonstration was effective particularly because it was open to the inspection of the public at large. The police had arranged an excellent bundobust. The collector and the D. S. P. witnessed the show in person and thanked the rationalists for the public exposure of the hoax. The news of the eagerly awaited result of the demonstration was flashed on the radio in local news at 18.50 hours on 13-12-77. The morning newspapers of 14-12-77 carried the headlines and details of the exposure of the miracle. The leading dailies wrote editorials the next day. The news also appeared in the Bombay edition of the Indian Express.

## SCANDAL OF AMBASSADOR HOTEL :

In quick succession of the scandal of Sandoz House, the scandal of the deal of Ambassador Hotel came into public. This 5-Star Hotel in Bombay owned by Sultan Bros. Pvt. Ltd., a wholly owned company of the Bohra priest family was sold to the Narangs (Rama Narang was arrested under MISA) for Rs. 76 lakhs. The balance was allegedly paid to the priest family in Switzerland/Dubai.

# Test for your Reason—No. 4

Vasireddy Madhu

A history professor was studying the civilization in a remote island. There were two groups of people similar in dress, habits and behaviour. They had one striking difference in that one group, namely, "rationalists", always told the truth while the "theists" were always lying.

During one of his strolls he met three persons, A, B and C.

Prof : (addressing A) — To which group do you belong?

A : Sir, I belong to..... (inaudible).

Prof : (addressing B) — what does A say?

B : He says that he belongs to the theists' group.

C : No sir, B is lying.

A : No sir, C is lying.

Prof : OK. It is alright, carry on.

The professor was sure as to which group each one of them belonged. Can you deduce the answer and explain?

## RULES :

1. The entries should be received on or before 10-2-78

2. There is a prize of Rs. 10/- in the form of books to be sent to the winner. If there are more than one correct entry, the prize will be decided on lots.

3. Readers are requested to quote their Membership Number or Subscription Number,

## Solution For December- Test For Reason

The solution is quite simple. You have to first pull out any drawer from the cabinet stencilled "Files and Registers". You can easily conclude that all the other drawers in it also would contain files only. Then you go to the cupboard stencilled "Registers only". From the clues it cannot contain registers. Since you have already detected the "files only" cabinet, it should be containing both files and registers. Now even a school boy can conclude that the third one contains only registers. Even if the drawer pulled out by you contains registers, the logical inferences would be similar.

The names of the winners will be published in the next issue.

## EXPULSION OF BOHRAS FROM TANZANIA :

No enquiry was made as to why the Bohra hierarchy were expelled by Tanzania, no enquiry was made for the front page story in Blitz exposing the diamonds found in their turbans at the Colombo Airport, no enquiry was made into various other economic offences and repressive measures used by the hierarchy.

# NEW MEMBERS

We heartily welcome the following new members :

## Patron Member

PM-11 Mr. Yahya Akbarali Lokhandwala Bombay (Maharashtra)

## Life Members

### Name

### Place

LM-44 Mr. V. S. Rao Naidu

Baroda (Gujarat)

LM-45 Mr. M. K. Samanth

Bombay (Maharashtra)

## Ordinary Members

M-435 Mr. K. S. Baskar

Madras (Tamilnadu)

M-436 Mr. S. Sridharan, M.A.

Madras (Tamilnadu)

M-437 Mr. K. R. Palani Pillai

Madras (Tamilnadu)

M-438 Mr. A. Manohara Rao, B.Sc.

Madras (Tamilnadu)

M-439 Mr. V. Mallikarjuna Rao, I.A.E.

Mothugudem (A. P.)

## Student Members

SM-43 Ms. R. Jyothi

Tirupathy (A. P.)

SM-44 Mr. R. Janardhan, B Sc.

Narasingapuram (A.P.)

*General Secretary, I. R. A.*

## NEWS AND NOTES-(Cont. from 333)

### Inter Caste Wedding

On 9-12-1977, Mr. Arzica Ponnuswamy married Ms. Savithri Devi under the auspices of I. R. A. The bride and bridegroom belong to two different caste and linguistic groups. Both are members of Indian Rationalist Association. Mr. Ponnusamy takes an active part in I.R.A's activities by drawing cartoons and pictures for FREE THOUGHT.

### I. R. A. Enters Tourist Fair

For the first time in its history, Indian Rationalist Association has opened a stall in the 1977-78 All India Tourist and Trade Fair, in Madras. This is in deference to the wishes of many members that I. R. A. should endeavour to go close to the people. The fair was inaugurated on 22-12-1977 by the Governor of

Tamilnadu under the presidentship of the Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Mr. M. G. Ramachandran.

According to the reports received from the Exhibition Stall there has been very good response. The membership/subscription Campaign as well as sale of books have exceeded our expectations. Since this is the first time that any Rationalist / Atheist Association has participated in a Tourist and Trade Fair of this sort in such a big way, the stall is drawing a few scores.

I. R. A. members and FREETHOUGHT readers may also like to visit our stall and make their purchase of Rationalist, Atheist and Humanist Books. The Stall Number is 66 in the shopping arcade. While city members and well wishers are requested to help us in managing the stall, the outstation members may kindly send their generous donations to meet the exorbitant expenses of the stall,

## ERRATA

The regret that the article "A Close Look at Islam" is continued from Page 325 on page 311



# RATIONALIST AND ATHEIST BOOKS FOR SALE

The following books have been recently received from various publishers. For members of Indian Rationalist Association postage by ordinary post is free. Others may kindly add 10% of the value of the books towards postage, packing and forwarding:

1. Story of an R. S. S. Worker	4 00
2. Secularism and Communalism	1 50
3. R. S. S.—A Danger to Democracy	5 00
4. R. S. S.—Ideology X-rayed	1 50
5. Reason, Romanticism and Revolution Vol. I—by M. N. Roy	20 00
6. " " Vol. II—"	25 00
7. Materialism " "	15 00
8. New Humanism " "	8 00
9. From Savagery to Civilization " "	12 00
10. Letters from Jail " "	10 00
11. My Experience in China " "	4 00
12. Poverty or Plenty " "	5 00
13. National Government & Peoples Government " "	3 00
14. Communist International " "	2 00
15. Begone Godmen—by Dr. A. T. Kovo r	8 00
16. Vedanta and Bengal—Niranjan Dhar	40 00
17. M. N. Roy—Revolution and Reason in Indian Politics—D. Grover	30 00
18. Selected Thoughts of Dr. Ambedkar—P. Thangaraj	4 00
19. Thus Spoke Ambedkar Vol. I—Bhagwandas	7 00
20. " Vol. II—"	7 00
21. Annihilation of Caste—Dr. B. R. Ambedkar	6 00
22. Gandhi & Gandhism " "	8 00
23. Communal Dead lock & a way to solve it—Dr. B. R. Ambedkar	3 00
24. Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables " "	3 00
25. Ranade Gandhi & Jinnah " "	3 00
26. Dr. Ambedkar on Pact " "	5 00
27. Thoughts on Dr. Ambedkar " "	3 00
28. Lure of Miracles—B. Premanand	8 00
29. Psycho Somatic Structure of Miracles—P. K. Narayana	5 00
30. Divine Octopus—B. Premanand	10 00
31. The Role of Bhagvad Gita in Indian History—Prem Nath Bazaz	100 00
32. We Become Atheists—Gora	5 00
33. Positive Atheism " "	5 00
34. I Learn " "	4 00
35. Hindu Epics—Prof. Surendra, K. S. Ajnat	3 00
36. Black American	10 00

Details of Booklets priced at Re. 1/- and less as also list of books in Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu would be supplied on request.

All the above books can be had from:

Indian Rationalist Association, 28/18, Pantheon Road, Madras-8, or at their Stall No. 66 in Shopping Arcade at the All India Tourist and Trade Fair being conducted at Madras.

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